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LETTERS TO HOGG

LETTERS
FROM
PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY
TO
THOMAS JEFFERSON HOGG.



WITH NOTES BY W. M. ROSSETTI AND
H. BUXTON FORMAN.

VOLUME I.

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This is to certify

that of this book

Thirty Copies only have been Printed.

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LETTERS.

LETTERS
TO
THOMAS JEFFERSON HOGG.



LETTER I.

FIELD PLACE,
HORSHAM, SUSSEX.
December 20th, 1810.
[*Thursday.*]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The moment which announces your residence, I write.

There is now need of all my art ; I must resort to deception.

My father called on Stockdale in

London, who has converted him to sanctity. He mentioned my name, as a supporter of sceptical principles. My father wrote to me, and I am now surrounded, environed, by dangers, to which compared the devils who besieged St. Anthony were all inefficient. They attack me for my detestable principles ; I am reckoned an outcast ; yet I defy them, and laugh at their ineffectual efforts.

Stockdale will no longer do for me. Stockdale's skull is very thick, but I am afraid that he will not believe my assertion ; indeed, should it gain credit with *him*, should he accept the offer of publication, there exist numbers who will find out, or imagine, a real tendency ; and booksellers possess more power than we are aware of in impeding the sale of any book containing opinions displeasing to them. I am disposed to offer it to Wilkie and Robinson, Paternoster Row, and to take it there

myself; they published Godwin's works, and it is scarcely possible to suppose that any one, layman or clergyman, will assert that these support Gospel doctrines. If that will not do, I must print it myself. Oxford, of course, would be most convenient for the correction of the press.

Mr. L.'s* principles are not *very* severe; he is more a votary to Mammon than God.

O! I burn with impatience for the moment of the dissolution of intolerance; it has injured me! I swear on the altar of perjured Love to revenge myself on the hated cause of the effect which *even now* I can scarcely help deploring. Indeed, I think it is to the benefit of society to destroy the opinions which can annihilate the dearest of its ties.

Inconveniences would now result from my *owning* the novel which I have

* "L." is probably the initial of some Oxford printer or publisher.

in preparation for the press. I give out, therefore, that I will publish no more ; every one here, but the select few who enter into my schemes, believe my assertion. I will stab the wretch in secret. Let us hope that the wound which I inflict, though the dagger be concealed, will rankle in the heart of the adversary.

My father wished to withdraw me from college : I would not consent to it. There lowers a terrific tempest ; but I stand as it were, on a pharos, and smile exultingly at the vain beating of the billows below.

So much for egotism !

Your poetry pleases me very much ; the idea is beautiful, but I hope the contrast is not from nature. The verses on the Dying Gladiator are good, but they seem composed in a hurry. I am composing a *satirical* poem : I shall print it at Oxford, unless I find, on visiting him, that R[obinson] is ripe for

printing whatever will sell. In case of that, he is my man.

It is not William Godwin who lives in Holborn : it is *John*, no relation to the other.

As to W.,* I wrote to him when in London, by way of a gentle alternative. He promised to write to me when he had time, seemed surprised at what I had said, yet directed to me as "The Reverend" : his amazement must be extreme.

I shall not read Bishop Prettyman, or any more of them, unless I have some particular reason. Bigots will not argue ; it destroys the very nature of the thing to argue ; it is contrary to *faith*. How, therefore, could you suppose that one of these *liberal* gentlemen would listen to scepticism, on the subject even of St. Athanasius's sweeping anathema?

* "W." seems to have been some person of public note to whom Shelley had written on religious topics (especially the Athanasian creed) in a tone which, though sceptical, was also grave, and which misled "W." into supposing his correspondent to be a clergyman.

I have something else to tell you, and I will in another letter.

Love! dearest, sweetest power! how much are we indebted to thee! How much superior are even thy miseries to the pleasures which arise from other sources! How much superior to "fat, contented ignorance" is even the agony which thy votaries experience! Yes, my friend, I am now convinced that a monarchy is the only form of government (in a certain degree) which a lover ought to live under. Yet in this alone is subordination necessary. *Man* is equal, and I am convinced that equality will be the attendant on a more advanced and ameliorated state of society. But this is assertion, not proof,—indeed, there can be none. Then you will say, "Excuse my believing it." Willingly.

St. Irvyne is come out; it is sent to you at Mr. Dayrell's; you can get one in London by mentioning my name to

Stockdale. You need not state your own ; and, as names are not *now* inscribed on the front of every existing creature,* you run no risk of discovery in person, if it be a crime or a sin to procure my Novel.

How can you fancy that I shall ever think you mad ? Am not *I* the wildest, the most delirious, of Enthusiasm's offspring ? On one subject I am cool, toleration ; yet that coolness alone possesses me that I may with more certainty guide the spear to the breast of my adversary, with more certainty ensanguine it with the heart's blood of Intolerance—hated name !

Adieu. Down with Bigotry ! Down with Intolerance ! In this endeavour your most sincere friend will join his every power, his every feeble resource. Adieu.

To T. J. Hogg,
Lincoln's Inn Fields.

* An allusion probably to the brand of Cain.

LETTER II.

FIELD PLACE,
HORSHAM, SUSSEX.

December 23rd, 1810.

[*Sunday.*]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The first desire which I felt on receiving your letters was instantly to come to London, that a friend might sympathise in those sorrows which are beyond alleviation.* That I cannot do this week ; on Sunday or Monday next I will come, if you still remain in town.

Why will you add to the never-dying remorse which my egotising folly has occasioned (for which, so long as its fatal effects remain, never can I forgive myself), by accusing yourself of a feeling,

* The lady who was so disturbing Shelley's mind at this time was his cousin, Harriet Grove.

as intrusive, which I cannot but regard as another part of that amiability which has marked your character since first I had the happiness of your friendship? Where exists the moral wrong of seeking the society of one whom I loved? What offence to reason, to virtue, was there in desiring the communication of a lengthened correspondence, in order that both, she and myself, might see if, by coincidence of intellect, we were willing to enter into a closer, an eternal union? No, it is no offence to reason or virtue; it is obeying its most imperious dictates,—it is complying with the designs of the Author of our nature. Can this be immorality? Can it be selfishness, or interested ambition, to seek the happiness of the object of attachment? I am sure your own judgment, your own reason, must answer in the negative. Let me now ask you—what reason was there then for *despair*, even supposing my love to have been incurable?

Her disposition was, in all probability, divested of the enthusiasm by which mine is characterized : could therefore hers be prophetic ? She might not be susceptible of that feeling, which arises from an admiration of virtue when abstracted from identity.

My sister attempted sometimes to plead my cause, but unsuccessfully. She said :—

“Even supposing I take your representation of your brother’s qualities and sentiments (which, as you coincide in and admire, I may fairly imagine to be exaggerated, although *you* may not be aware of the exaggeration), what right have *I*, admitting that he is so superior, to enter into an intimacy which must end in delusive disappointment when he finds how really inferior I am to the being which his heated imagination has pictured ?”

This was unanswerable, particularly as the prejudiced description of a sister,

who loves her brother as she does, might, indeed *must*, have given to her an erroneously exalted idea of the superiority of my mental attainments.

You have said that the philosophy which I pursued is not uncongenial with the strictest morality. You must see that it militates with the received opinions of the world. What, therefore, does it offend but prejudice and superstition; that superstitious bigotry, inspired by the system upon which at present the world acts, of believing all that we are told as incontrovertible facts?

I hope that what I have said will induce you to allow me still, and all the more, to remain your friend.

I hope that you will soon have an opportunity of seeing, of conversing with, Elizabeth.

How sorry I am that I cannot invite you here now! I will tell you the reason when we meet. Believe me, my dear friend, when I assert that I shall

ever continue so to you. I have reason to lament deeply the sorrows with which fate has marked my life. I am not so deeply debased by it, however, but that the exertions for the happiness of my friend shall supersede considerations of narrower and selfish interest,—but that his woes should claim a sigh before one repining thought arose at my own lot. I know the cause of all human disappointment,—worldly prejudice ; mine is the same. I know also its origin,—bigotry.

Adieu. Write again. Believe me
your most sincere friend. Adieu.*

P. B. S.

To T. J. Hogg,

Lincoln's Inn Fields.

* Elizabeth Shelley, referred to in the foregoing letter and so often in this volume, was the poet's eldest sister, born considerably within two years of the date of his birth. At the time of this correspondence she was just over sixteen years and a half old. The next sister, Mary, was only thirteen and a half.

LETTER III.

FIELD PLACE,
HORSHAM, SUSSEX.

December 26th, 1810.

[Wednesday.]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Why do you express yourself so flatteringly grateful to me, when I ought to experience that sensation towards *you* in the highest manner of which our nature is capable? Why do you yet suppose that you have offended against any of those rules for our conduct which we ought to regard with veneration?

What is delicacy? Come, I must be severe with myself; I must irritate the wound which I wish to heal.

Supposing the object of my affections

does not regard me, how have *you* transgressed against its dictates? in what have you offended? What is delicacy? Let us define it, in the light in which you take it. I conceive it to be that inherent repugnance to injuring others, particularly as regarding the objects of their dearer preference, which beings of superior intelligence feel. In what then, let me ask again, if *I* do not think you culpable, in what then have you offended? Tell me, then, my dear friend, no more of "sorrow," no more of "remorse," at what you have said. Circumstances have operated in such a manner that the attainment of the object of my heart was impossible, whether on account of extraneous influences, or from a feeling which possessed her mind, which told her *not* to deceive another, not to give him the possibility of disappointment. I feel I touch the string which, if vibrated, excites acute pain;

but *truth*, and my real feelings which I wish to give you a clear idea of, overcome my resolve never to speak on the subject again. It is with reluctance to my own feelings that I have entered into this cold disquisition, when your heart sympathizes so deeply in my affliction. But for Heaven's sake consider, and do not criminate yourself; do not wrong the motives which actuated you upon so feeble a ground as that of *delicacy*. I do this, I say this, in justice as well as friendship; I demand that you should do *justice* to yourself,—then no more is required to give you at all events a consciousness of rectitude.

I read most of your letters to my sister; she frequently enquires after you, and we talk of you often. I do not wish to awaken her intellect too powerfully; this must be my apology for not communicating *all* my speculations to her.

Thanks, *truly* thanks for opening your heart to me, for telling me your feelings towards me. Dare I do the same to you? I dare not to myself; how can I to another, perfect as he may be? I dare not even to God, whose mercy is great. My unhappiness is excessive. But I will cease; I will no more speak in riddles, but now quit for *ever* a subject which awakens too powerful susceptibilities for even negative misery. But that which injured me shall perish! I even now by anticipation hear the expiring yell of Intolerance!

Pardon me. My sorrows are not so undeserved as you believe; they are obtrusive to narrate to myself; they must be so to you. Let me wish you an eternity of happiness.

I wish you knew Elizabeth; she is a great consolation to me; but, if all be well, my wishes on that score will soon be accomplished. On Monday night

you will see me. I cannot bear to suffer alone. Adieu. I have scarce a moment's time, only to tell you how sincerely I am your friend.*

* This letter contains an expression of great value in dealing with an important matter of textual criticism: "I feel I touch the string which, if vibrated, excites acute pain." This seems to settle the question whether Shelley was capable of using *vibrate* as a transitive verb. This he is said to have done in the *Ode to Liberty*. In the words

A glorious people vibrated again
The lightning of the nations,

the use of the word is precisely the same; and the occurrence of the phrase in this letter leaves but little hope that he really meant the first sentence of the *Ode* to end at *again*.

LETTER IV.

FIELD PLACE,
HORSHAM, SUSSEX.

December, 28th, 1810.

[Friday.]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The encomium of one incapable of flattery is indeed flattering. Your discrimination of that chapter is more just than the praises which you bestow on so unconnected a thing as the romance* taken collectively. I wish *you* very much to publish a tale; send one to a publisher.

Oh, here we are in the midst of all the uncongenial jollities of Christmas! When you are compelled to contribute to the merriment of others—when you

* *St. Irvyne.*

are compelled to live under the severest of all restraints, concealment of feelings pregnant enough in themselves—how terrible is your lot! I am learning abstraction, but I fear that my proficiency will be but trifling. I cannot, dare not, speak of myself. Why do you still continue to say, “Do not despond”—that “You must not despair”?

I admit that this despair would be unauthorized, when it was rational to suppose that at some future time mutual knowledge would awaken reciprocity of feeling.

Your letter arrived at a moment when I could least bear any additional excitement of feelings. I have succeeded now in calming my mind, but at first I knew not how to act. Indecision, and a fear of injuring another by complying with what perhaps were the real wishes of my bosom, distracted me. I do not tell you this by way of confession of my own state; for I

believe that I may not be sufficiently aware of what I feel, myself, even to own it to myself. Believe me, my dear friend, that my only ultimate wishes *now* are for your happiness and that of my sisters. At present a thousand barriers oppose any more intimate connexion, any union, with another,—which, although unnatural and fettering to a virtuous mind, are nevertheless unconquerable.

I will, if possible, come to London on Monday,* certainly some time next week. I shall come about six o'clock, and will remain with you until that time the next morning, when I will tell you my reasons for wishing to return. Adieu. Excuse the shortness of this, as the servant waits. I will write on Sunday.†

Yours most sincerely.

* *December 31st, 1810.*

† *December 30th, 1810.* No letter written by Shelley under this date is at present forthcoming.

LETTER V.

FIELD PLACE,
HORSHAM, SUSSEX.

January 2nd, 1811.

[Wednesday.]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I cannot come to London before next week. I am but just returned to Field Place from an inefficient effort. Why do you, my happy friend, tell me of perfection in love? Is she not gone? And yet I breathe, I live! But adieu to egotism; I am sick to death at the name of *self*.

Oh, your theory cost me much reflection; I have not ceased to think of it since your letter came, which was put into my hands at the moment of

departure on Sunday morning.* Is it not, however, founded on that *hateful* principle? Is it *self* which you propose to raise to a state of superiority by your system of eternal perfectibility in love? No! Were this frame rendered eternal, were the particles which compose it, both as to intellect and matter, indestructible, and then to undergo torments such as now we should shudder to think of, even in a dream,—to undergo this, I say, for the extension of happiness to those for whom we feel a vivid preference,—then would I love, adore, idolize your theory—wild, unfounded as it might be. But no. I can conceive *neither* of these to be correct. Considering matters in a philosophical light, it evidently appears (if it is not treason to speak thus coolly on a subject so deliriously ecstatic) that we were not destined for misery. What, then, shall happiness arise from? Can we hesitate?

* December 30th, 1810.

Love, dear love! And, though every mental faculty is bewildered by the agony which is in this life its too constant attendant, still is not that very agony to be preferred to the most thrilling sensualities of epicurism?

I have wandered in the snow, for I am cold, wet, and mad. Pardon me, pardon my delirious egotism ; this really *shall* be the last.

My sister is well ; I fear she is not quite happy on my account, but is much more cheerful than she was some days ago. I hope you will publish a tale ; I shall then give a copy to Elizabeth, unless *you* forbid it. I would do it not only to show her what your ideas are on the subject of works of imagination, and to interest her, but that she should see her brother's friend in a new point of view. When you examine her character, you will find humanity, not divinity, amiable as the former may sometimes be. How-

ever, I, a brother, must not write treason against my sister; so I will check my volubility. Do not direct your next letter to Field Place, only to Horsham.

To-morrow I will write more connectedly.

Yours sincerely.

LETTER VI.

FIELD PLACE,
HORSHAM, SUSSEX.
January 3rd, 1811.
[*Thursday.*]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Before we deny or believe the existence of anything, it is necessary that we should have a tolerably clear idea of what it is.* The word "God," a

* This letter (of *January 3rd, 1811*) is of some importance in the history of Shelley's religious opinions. It shows that the youth who, on the *25th of March, 1811*, was expelled from Oxford as author and distributor of *The Necessity of Atheism*, could, even as late as the *3rd of January* in the same year, argue zealously in behalf:—Firstly, of the immortality of the soul, and, Secondly, of the existence of an intelligent "Soul of the Universe," or "First Cause," as a necessary antecedent to that immortality; at the same time he would eliminate the word "God" from the field of discussion. This is sufficiently consonant with what is propounded in the Notes to *Queen Mab*, printed (not published) in 1813.

vague word, has been, and will continue to be, the source of numberless errors, until it is erased from the nomenclature of philosophy. Does it not imply "the soul of the universe,—the intelligent and *necessarily* beneficent actuating principle? This it is impossible not to believe in. I may not be able to adduce proofs; but I think that the leaf of a tree, the meanest insect on which we trample, are in themselves arguments, more conclusive than any which can be advanced, that some vast intellect animates infinity. If we disbelieve *this*, the strongest argument in support of the existence of a future state instantly becomes annihilated. I confess that I think Pope's

"All are but parts of a stupendous whole"

something more than poetry. It has ever been my favourite theory. For the immortal soul "never to be able to

die, never to escape from some shrine as chilling as the clay-formed dungeon which it now inhabits"—is the future punishment which I can most easily believe in.

Love,—love infinite in extent, eternal in duration, yet (allowing your theory in that point) perfectible—should be the reward. But can we suppose that this reward will arise spontaneously, as a necessary appendage to our nature? or that our nature itself could be without cause—a first cause,—a God. When do we see effects arise without causes? What causes are there without correspondent effects?

Yet here I swear—and as I break my oaths, may Infinity, Eternity, blast me—here I swear that never will I forgive Intolerance! It is the only point on which I allow myself to encourage revenge. / Every moment shall be devoted to my object, which I can spare; and let me hope that it

will not be a blow which spends itself, and leaves the wretch at rest,—but lasting, long revenge! I am convinced, too, that it is of great disservice to society,—that it encourages prejudices which strike at the root of the dearest, the tenderest, of its ties. Oh how I wish *I* were the avenger!—that it were mine to crush the demon, to hurl him to his native hell, never to rise again, and thus to establish for ever perfect and universal toleration! I expect to gratify some of this insatiable feeling in poetry.

You shall see—you shall hear—how it has injured me. She is no longer mine! she abhors me as a sceptic, as what *she* was before! O Bigotry! when I pardon this last, this severest of thy persecutions, may Heaven (if there be wrath in Heaven) blast me! Has vengeance, in its armoury of wrath, a punishment more dreadful?—Yet forgive me, I have done; and were

it not for your great desire to know *why* I consider myself as the victim of severer anguish, that I could have entered into this brief recital.*

I am afraid there is selfishness in the passion of love, for I cannot avoid feeling every instant as if my soul was bursting. But I *will* feel no more: it is selfish. I would feel for others; but for myself—oh how much rather would I expire in the struggle! Yes, that were a relief! Is suicide wrong? I slept with a loaded pistol and some poison last night, but did not die.

I could not come on Monday, my sister would not part with me; but I must—I will—see you soon. My sister is now comparatively happy; she has felt deeply for me. Had it not been for her—had it not been for a sense of what I owed to her, to *you*—I should have bidden you a final farewell some time ago. But can the

* This imperfect sentence must mean "I could *not*," &c. The *that* has no business there.

dead feel? Dawns any day-beam on the night of dissolution?

Pray publish your tale; demand one hundred pounds for it from any publisher—he will give it in the event. It is delightful, it is divine! Not that I like your heroine: but the poor Mary is a character worthy of Heaven—I adore her!*

Adieu, my dear friend,

Your sincere,

P. B. S[HELLEY.]

P.S.—W——† has written. I have read his letter: it is too long to answer. I continue to dissipate Elizabeth's melancholy by keeping her, as much as possible, employed in poetry. You shall see some to-morrow. I cannot tell you when I can come to town. I wish it very much.

* Perhaps the early verses written by Shelley, named *To Mary, who died in this opinion*, may refer to the "Mary" of Hogg's MS. novel. There is no known person, actually connected with Shelley's biography, to whom those verses can refer.

† See *ante*, p. 7.

LETTER VII.

FIELD PLACE,
HORSHAM, SUSSEX.

January 6th, 1811.

[*Sunday.*]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Dare I request *one* favor for *myself*—for my own sake? Not the keenest anguish which the most unrelenting tyrant could invent should force me to request from you so great a sacrifice of friendship. It is a beloved sister's happiness which forces me to this. She saw me when I received your letter of yesterday. She saw the conflict of my soul. At first she said nothing: and then she exclaimed,

"Re-direct it,* and send it instantly to the post!" Believe me, I feel far more than I will *allow* myself to express, for the cruel disappointments which I have undergone. Write to me whatever you wish to say. You may say what you will on *other* subjects: but on *that* I dare not even read what you would write. *Forget* her?

What would I not have given up to have been thus happy?† I thought I knew the means by which it might have been effected. Yet I consider what a female sacrifices when she returns the attachment even of one whose faith she supposes inviolable. Hard is the agony which is indescribable, which is only to be felt. Will she not encounter the opprobrium of the world?

* Shelley, it would seem, received a letter from Hogg, and guessed that it referred to the painful subject of Miss Grove. Elizabeth induced him to return this letter, unread, to Hogg himself.

† "Thus happy" seems to mean *not* "so happy as to forget her," but "so happy as to make her mine."

and, what is more severe (generally speaking), the dereliction and contempt of those who before had avowed themselves most attached to her. I did not encourage the remotest suspicion. I was convinced of her truth, as I was of my own existence. Still, was it not *natural* in her (even although she might return the most enthusiastic prepossessions arising from the consciousness of intellectual sympathy)—ignorant as she was of *some* of my opinions, of my sensations (for *unlimited* confidence is requisite for the existence of mutual love)—to have some doubts, some fears? Besides, when in her natural character, her spirits are good, her conversation animated; and she was almost, in consequence, ignorant of the refinements in love which can only be attained by solitary reflection.

Forsake her! Forsake one whom I loved! Can I? Never!—But she

is gone—she is lost to me for ever ;
for ever.

There is a mystery which I dare not
to clear up ; it is the only point on
which I will be reserved to you. I
have tried the methods you would
have recommended. I followed her.
I would have followed her to the end
of the earth, but—— If you value
the little happiness which yet remains,
do not mention again to me sorrows
which, if you could share in, would
wound a heart which it now shall be
my endeavour to heal of those pains
which, through sympathy with me, it
has already suffered.

I will crush Intolerance ! I will, at
least, attempt it. To *fail* even in so
useful an attempt were glorious.

I enclose some poetry :—*

* The correct title of this poem, it seems, is *On an
Icicle that clung to the Grass of a Grave*,—not *The
Tear*, as formerly printed in editions of Shelley's

*Oh! take the pure gem to where southerly
breezes,
Waft repose to some bosom as faithful as
fair,
In which the warm current of love never
freezes,*

*As it rises unmingled with selfishness there,
Which, untainted by pride, unpolluted by care,
Might dissolve the dim icedrop, might bid it
arise,
Too pure for these regions, to gleam in the
skies.*

*Or where the stern warrior, his country defend-
ing,
Dares fearless the dark-rolling battle to
pour,
Or o'er the fell corpse of a dread tyrant bend-
ing,
Where patriotism red with his guilt-reeking
gore*

*Plants liberty's flag on the slave-peopled shore,
With victory's cry, with the shout of the free,
Let it fly, taintless spirit, to mingle with thee.*

*For I found the pure gem, when the daybeam
returning,
Ineffectual gleams on the snow-covered plain,*

poems. The true title explains sufficiently the meaning of the first few lines in a composition without much value other than biographical.

*When to others the wished-for arrival of morn-
ing*

*Brings relief to long visions of soul-racking
pain ;*

*But regret is an insult—to grieve is in vain :
And why should we grieve that a spirit so fair
Seeks Heaven to mix with its own kindred
there ?*

*But still 'twas some spirit of kindness descend-
ing*

*To share in the load of mortality's woe,
Who over thy lowly-built sepulchre bending
Bade sympathy's tenderest tear-drop to flow.
Not for thee, soft compassion, celestials did
know,
But if angels can weep, sure man may repine,
May weep in mute grief o'er thy low-laid
shrine.*

*And did I then say, for the altar of glory,
That the earliest, the loveliest of flowers I'd
entwine,
Tho' with millions of blood-reeking victims
'twas gory,
Tho' the tears of the widow polluted its
shrine,
Tho' around it the orphans, the fatherless
pine ?*

*Oh ! Fame, all thy glories I'd yield for a tear
To shed on the grave of a heart so sincere.*

I am very cold this morning, so you must excuse bad writing, as I have been most of the night pacing a churchyard. I must now engage in scenes of strong interest.

You see the subject of the foregoing. I send it, because it may amuse you. Your letter has just arrived ; I will send W——'s * to University, when I can collect them. If it amuses you, you can answer him ; if not, I will.

I will consider your argument against the Non-existence of a Deity. Do you allow that some *supernatural* power actuates the organization of physical causes ? It is evident so far as this, that, if *power* and *wisdom* are employed in the continual arrangement of these affairs, this power, &c., is something out of the comprehension of man, as he now exists ; at least if we allow that the soul is *not* matter. Then, admitting that this actuating principle is

* See *ante*, pp. 7 and 32.

such as I have described, admitting it to be finite, there must be something beyond this, which influences *its* actions; and all this series advancing (as, if it does in one instance, it must to infinity) must at last terminate, in the existence which may be called a Deity. And, *if* this Deity thus influences the actions of the Spirits (if I may be allowed the expression) which take care of minor events (supposing your theory to be true), why is it *not* the soul of the Universe? in what is it not analogous to the soul of man? Why too is *not* gravitation the soul of a clock? I entertain no doubt of the fact, although it possesses no capabilities of variation. If the principle of life (that of reason put out of the question, as in the cases of dogs, horses, and oysters) be *soul*, then gravitation is as much the soul of a clock as animation is that of an oyster. I think we may not inaptly define *Soul*

as "the most supreme, superior, and distinguished abstract appendage to the nature of anything."

But I will write again: my head is rather dizzy to-day, on account of not taking rest, and a slight attack of typhus.

Adieu, I will write soon.

Your sincerest

PERCY B. SHELLEY.*

*To T. J. Hogg,
University College,
Oxford.*

* The morbid passage at the top of page 39, about pacing a churchyard all night, is interesting in so far as it may have been the recollection of that incident which furnished the poet with the germ of the fine lines in *Alastor*—

I have made my bed
In charnels and on coffins, where black death
Keeps record of the trophies won from thee,
Hoping to still these obstinate questionings
Of thee and thine, by forcing some lone ghost
Thy messenger, to render up the tale
Of what we are.

LETTER VIII.

FIELD PLACE,
HORSHAM, SUSSEX.

January 11th, 1811.

[Friday.]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I will not now consider your little Essay, which arrived this morning; I wait till to-morrow. It coincides exactly with Elizabeth's sentiments on the subject, to whom I read it. Indeed it has convinced her; although, from my having a great deal to do to-day, I cannot listen to so full an exposition of her sentiments on the subject as I would wish to send you. I shall write to you to-morrow on this matter; and, if you clear up some doubts which yet

remain, dissipate some hopes relative to the perfectibility of man, generally considered as well as individually, I will willingly submit to the system,—which at present I cannot but strongly reprobate.

How can I find words to express my thanks for such generous conduct with regard to my sister? * With talents and attainments such as you possess, to promise what I ought not perhaps to have required, what nothing but a dear sister's intellectual improvement could have induced me to demand! What can I say on the subject of your letter concerning Elizabeth? is it not dictated by the most generous and disinterested of human motives? I have not shown it to her yet; I need not explain the reason. On this point you know all.

* The words "generous conduct" must refer to the inditing and despatching of the "Little Essay," for the clearing up of some of Elizabeth's hazy speculative ideas—and a general promise of intellectual aid to her.

There is only one affair * of which I will make the least cloud of mystery ; it is the only point on which I will be a solitary being. To be solitary, to be reserved, in communicating pain, surely cannot be criminal ; it cannot be contrary to the strictest duties of friendship.

She is gone ! She is lost to me for ever ! She is married ! † Married to a clod of earth ! She will become as insensible herself ; all those fine capabilities will moulder !

Let us speak no more on the subject. Do not deprive me of the little remains of peace which yet linger, that

* No doubt the *affaire de cœur* with Miss Harriet Grove.

† This letter announces that Harriet Grove "is married." But it appears that in fact she did not marry until about August of the same year [see Rossetti's *Memoir of Shelley*, p. 26]. The letter seems to be correctly dated in January, and the discrepancy is a startling one. Perhaps the likeliest way of accounting for it is to suppose that Shelley, in saying that Harriet Grove was married, really meant that she had definitely engaged herself to marry, and was therefore virtually married. Or perhaps the words *to be* have been accidentally omitted in transcription.

which arises from endeavours to make others happy.

The Poetry which I sent you alluded not to the subject of my nonsensical ravings. I hope that you are now publishing one of your tales. L. * would do it, as well as any one; if you do not choose to *publish* a book at Oxford, you can *print* it there, and I will *engage* to dispose of five hundred copies. S—— professes to be acquainted with your family; *hinc illæ lacrymæ!*

I attempted to enlighten my father. *Mirabile dictu*, he for a moment listened to my arguments. He allowed the impossibility (considered abstractedly) of any preternatural interferences by Providence: he allowed the utter incredibility of witches, ghosts, legendary miracles. But, when I came to *apply* the truths on which we had agreed so harmoniously, he started at the bare

* See p. 5.

idea of some facts, generally believed, never having existed, and silenced me with an equine argument ; in effect with these words—"I believe, because I do not believe."

My mother imagines me to be on the high road to Pandemonium ; she fancies I want to make a deistical coterie of all my little sisters : how laughable !

You must be very solitary at Oxford. I wish I could come there now ; but, for reasons which I will tell you at meeting, it is delayed for a fortnight. I have a Poem * with Mr. L——, which I shall certainly publish ; there is some of Elizabeth's in it. I will write to-morrow. I have something to add to it ; and, if L—— has any idea, when he speaks to you, of publishing it with my name, will you tell him to leave it alone till I come.

* This "Poem" may very probably have been the introuvable *Poetical Essay on the Existing State of Things*.

*Yes! the arms of Britannia victorious are
bearing*

*Fame, triumph, and glory, wherever they
speed,*

Her Lion his crest o'er the nations is rearing.

*Ruin follows, it tramples the dying and
dead,*

Thy countrymen fall, the blood-reeking bed

*Of the battle-slain sends a complaint-breath-
ing sigh,*

It is mixed with the shoutings of Victory.

Old Ocean to shrieks of despair is resounding,

*It washes the terror-struck nations with
gore,*

*Wild Horror the fear-palsied earth is astound-
ing,*

*And murmurs of fate fright the dread-con-
vulsed shore.*

The Andes in sympathy start at the roar,

*Vast Ætna, alarmed, leans his flame-glow-
ing brow,*

*And huge Teneriffe stoops with his pinnacled
snow.*

The ice mountains echo, the Baltic, the Ocean,

*Where Cold sits enthroned on his column of
snows,*

*Even Spitzbergen perceives the terrific commo-
tion,*

*The roar floats on the whirlwind of sleet, as
 this blows
 Blood tinges the streams as half-frozen they
 flow,
 The meteors of war lurid flame thro' the
 air,
 They mix their bright gleam with the red
 polar star.*

* * * *

*All are brethren, and even the African bending
 To the stroke of the hard-hearted English-
 man's rod,
 The courtier at Luxury's palace attending,
 The senator trembling at Tyranny's nod,
 Each nation which kneels at the footstool of
 God,
 All are brethren—then banish distinction
 afar,
 Let Concord and Love heal the miseries of
 War!*

These are Elizabeth's. She has written many more, and I will show you at some future time the whole of the composition. I like it very much,

THOMAS JEFFERSON HOGG. 49

if a brother may be allowed to praise a
sister. I will write to-morrow.

Yours with affection,

P. B. S.

Can you read this?

*To T. J. Hogg,
University College,
Oxford.*

LETTER IX.

FIELD PLACE,
HORSHAM, SUSSEX.

January 12th, 1811.

[*Saturday.*]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Your letter, with the extremely beautiful enclosed poetry, came this morning. It is really admirable; it touches the heart: but I must be allowed to offer *one* critique upon it. You will be surprised to hear that I think it unfinished. You have not said that the ivy, after it had destroyed the oak, as if to mock the miseries which it caused, twined around a pine which

stood near.* It is true, therefore, but does not comprehend the whole truth. As to the stuff which I sent you, I write all my poetry of that kind from the feelings of the moment ; if therefore it neither has allusion to the sentiments which rationally might be supposed to possess me, or to those which my situation might awaken, it is another proof of that egotizing variability, which I shudder to reflect how much I am in its power.

To *you* I dare represent myself as I am : wretched to the last degree. Sometimes one gleam of hope, one faint solitary gleam, seems to illumine the darkened prospect before me—but it has vanished. I fear it will never return. My sister will, I fear, never return the attachment which would once again bid me be calm. Yes ! In this alone

* This may possibly imply an embittered reference to the affair of Miss Grove : she being shadowed forth in the ivy, Shelley in the oak, and her husband in the pine.

is my feeble anticipation of peace placed ! But what am I ? Am I not the most degraded of deceived enthusiasts ? Do I not deceive myself ? I never, never can feel peace again !

What necessity is there for continuing in existence ? “ But Heaven ! Eternity ! Love ! ” My dear friend, I am yet a sceptic on these subjects : would that I could believe them to be as they are represented ; would that I could totally disbelieve them !—But no ! That would be selfish. I still have firmness enough to resist this last, this most horrible of errors. Is my despair the result of the hot sickly love which inflames the admirers of Sterne or Moore ? * It is the conviction of unmerited unkindness ; the conviction that, should a future world exist, the object of my attachment would be as miserable as myself, is the cause of it.

* Not Thomas Moore, but Dr. John Moore, author of *Zeluco* and *Mordaunt*.

I here take God (and a God exists) to witness, that I wish torments which beggar the futile description of a fancied hell would fall upon me, provided I could obtain thereby that happiness for what I love which, I fear, can never be ! The question is, What do I love ? It is almost unnecessary to answer. Do I love the person, the embodied identity, if I may be allowed the expression ? No ! I love what is superior, what is excellent, or what I conceive to be so ; and I wish, ardently wish, to be profoundly convinced of the existence of the Deity, that so superior a spirit might derive some degree of happiness from my feeble exertions : for love is heaven, and heaven is love. You think so too, and you disbelieve not the existence of an eternal, omnipresent Spirit.

Am I not mad ? Alas ! I am ; but I pour out my ravings into the ear of a friend who will pardon them.

Stay! I have an idea. I think I can prove the existence of a Deity—a First Cause. I will ask a materialist, How came this universe at first? He will answer, “By chance.” What chance? I will answer in the words of Spinoza: “An infinite number of atoms had been floating from all eternity in space, till at last one of them fortuitously diverged from its track, which, dragging with it another, formed the principle of gravitation, and in consequence the universe.” What cause produced this change, this chance? For where do we know that causes arise without their correspondent effects? At least we must here, on so abstract a subject, reason analogically. Was not this then a *cause*, was it not a *first* cause? Was not this first cause a Deity? Now nothing remains but to prove that this Deity has a care; or rather that its only employment consists in regulating the present and future

happiness of its creation. Our ideas of infinite space, &c. are scarcely to be called ideas, for we cannot either comprehend or explain them ; therefore the Deity must be judged by us from attributes analogical to our situation. Oh that this Deity were the soul of the universe, the spirit of universal, imperishable love ! Indeed I believe it is.

But now to your argument of the necessity of Christianity. I am not sure that your argument does not tend to prove its unreality. If it does not, —you allow, you say, that love is the only true source of rational happiness. One man is capable of it ; why not all ?

The cullibility of man preterite I allow ; but because men are and have been cullible, I see no reason why they should always continue so. Have there not been fluctuations in the opinions of mankind ? and, as the *stuff* which soul is made of must be in every one

the same, would not an extended system of rational and moral unprejudiced education render each individual capable of experiencing that degree of happiness to which each ought to aspire, more for others than self?

Hideous, hated traits of Superstition! Oh Bigots! how I abhor your influence! They are all bad enough. But do we not see Fanaticism decaying? Is not its influence weakened, except where Faber, Rowland Hill, and several others of the Armageddon heroes, maintain their posts with all the obstinacy of long-established dogmatism? How I pity them! how I despise, hate them!

Stockdale knows Mr. D. would publish your tale. I am beyond measure anxious for its appearance.

Adieu. Excuse my mad arguments; they are none at all, for I am rather confused,—and fear, in consequence of a fever, they will not allow me

THOMAS JEFFERSON HOGG. 57

to come * on the 26th ; but I *will*.
Adieu.

Your affectionate friend,
P. B. S.

You can enclose to Timothy Shelley,
Esq., M.P.

To *T. J. Hogg*,
University College,
Oxford.

* To Oxford, no doubt, *via* London.

LETTER X.

FIELD PLACE,
HORSHAM, SUSSEX.

January 14th, 1811.

[*Monday.*]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Your letter and that of W——* came to-day ; yours is excellent, and, I think, will fully (in his own mind) convince Mr. W——. I enclosed five sheets of paper full this morning, and sent them to the coach with yours. I sat up all night to finish them. They attack his hypothesis in its very basis, which, at some future time, I will explain to you ; and I have attempted to prove, from the *existence* of a Deity and of Revelation, the futility of the supersti-

* See pp. 7, 32, and 39.

tion upon which he founds his whole scheme.

I was sorry to see that you even remotely suspected me of being offended with you. How I wish that I could persuade you that it is impossible !

I am really sleepy. Could you suppose that I should be so apathetic as *ever* to sleep again till my last slumber ? But be it so, and I shall take a walk in St. Leonard's Forest to dissipate it.

Adieu. You shall hear from me to-morrow.

Your sincere friend,
P. B. S.

Stockdale has behaved infamously to me : he has abused the confidence I reposed in him in sending him my work ; and he has made very free with your character, of which he knows nothing, with my father. I shall call

on Stockdale on my way, that he may explain. May I expect to see your Tale printed?

*To T. J. Hogg,
University College,
Oxford.*

LETTER XI.

FIELD PLACE,
HORSHAM, SUSSEX.

January 16th, 1811.

[Wednesday.]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You will hear from me to-morrow. I have to-day scarcely time but to tell you that I do not forget you. You tell me that it will show greatness of soul to rise after such a fall as mine. Ah, what pain must I feel when I contradict the flattering view which you have taken of my character! Do I not know myself? Do I not feel the acutest poignancy of mortification, amounting to actual misery? Alas, I must, with Godwin, say that in man,

R

imperfect as he now exists, there is never a motive for action unmixed ; that the best has its alloy, the worst is commingled with virtue.

What does my mortification arise from ? Surely not wholly for myself, nor wholly for the happiness of the being whom I have lost. Did I know, were I convinced, that I felt for nothing but Her, no self-reproach would tell me that my pangs were disgraceful. But now, when I fear, when I feel, that, in spite of myself, regret for the high happiness I have lost is mingled with the other consideration, do I feel too that it is disgraceful, degrading !

Adieu. I will write to-morrow,

P. B. SHELLEY.

*To T. J. Hogg,
University College,
Oxford.*

LETTER XII.

FIELD PLACE,
HORSHAM, SUSSEX.

January 17th, 1811.

[Thursday.]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I shall be with you as soon as possible next week. You really were at Hungerford, whether you knew it or not. You tell me nothing about the tale which you promised me. I hope it gets on in the press. I am anxious for its appearance.

Stockdale certainly behaved in a vile manner to me; no other bookseller would have violated the confidence reposed in him. I will talk to him in London, where I shall be

on Tuesday. Can I do anything for you there?

You notice the peculiarity of the expression "My Sister" in my letters.* It certainly arose independent of consideration, and I am happy to hear that it is so.

Your systematic cudgel for block-heads is excellent. I tried it on with my father, who told me that thirty years ago he had read Locke, but this made no impression. The "*equus et res*" are all that I can boast of; the "*pater*" is swallowed up in the first article of the catalogue.

You tell me nothing of the tale; I am all anxiety about it. I am forced hastily to bid you adieu.

P. B. SHELLEY.

*To T. J. Hogg,
University College,
Oxford.*

* The "peculiarity" was, presumably, that Shelley who had four sisters, spoke of "my sister"—Elizabeth—as if he had only one. See note at p. 14.

LETTER XIII.

FIELD PLACE,
HORSHAM, SUSSEX.

[*January 23rd, 1811.*

Wednesday.]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You are all over the country. I shall be at Oxford on Friday or Saturday evening. I will write to you from London.

My father's prophetic prepossession in your favour is become as high as before it was to your prejudice. Whence it arises, or from what cause, I am inadequate to say ; I can merely state the fact. He came from London full of your praises ; your family, that of Mr. Hogg, of Norton House, near

Stockton-upon-Tees. Your principles are *now* as divine as before they were diabolical. I tell you this with extreme satisfaction, and, to sum up the whole, he has desired me to make his compliments to you, and to invite you to make Field Place your head-quarters for the Easter vacation. I hope you will accept of it. I fancy he has been talking in town to some of the northern Members of Parliament who are acquainted with your family. However that may be, I hope you have no other arrangement for Easter which can interfere with granting me the pleasure of introducing you personally here.

You have very well drawn your line of distinction between instinctive and rational motives of action. The *former* are not in our own power. Yet we may doubt if even these are *purely* selfish,—as congeniality, sympathy, unaccountable attractions of intellect, which arise independent frequently of

any considerations of your own interest, operating violently in contradiction to it, and bringing on wretchedness, which your reason plainly foresees,—which yet, although your judgment dis[ap]proves of, you take no pains to obviate. All this is not selfish. And surely the operations of reason, of judgment, in a man whose judgment is fully convinced of the baseness of any motive, can never be consonant with it.

Adieu. Your affectionate,

P. B. SHELLEY.

*To T. J. Hogg,
University College,
Oxford.*

LETTER XIV.

To JOHN HOGG, ESQ.*

15, POLAND STREET,
LONDON.

[April, 1811.]

SIR,

I accompanied (at his desire) Mr. Jefferson Hogg to Mr. C., who was entrusted with certain propositions to be offered to my friend. I was there extremely surprised—no less hurt than surprised—to find my father, in his interview with Mr. C., had, either unadvisedly or intentionally, let fall ex-

* Father of T. Jefferson Hogg.

pressions which conveyed an idea that Mr. Jefferson Hogg was the "original corruptor" of my principles. That on this subject (notwithstanding his long experience) Mr. T. Shelley must know less than his son, will be conceded; and I feel it but justice (in consequence of your feelings, so natural after what Mr. C. communicated) positively to deny the assertion. I feel this tribute, which I have paid to the just sense of horror you entertain, to be due to you as a gentleman. I hope my motives stand excused to your candour.

Myself and my friend have offered concessions*; painful, indeed, they are to myself, but such as on mature consideration we find due to our high sense of filial duty.

Permit me to request your indul-

* Concessions relating (at all events in part) to the conditions under which the intimacy between Hogg and Shelley was to be continued henceforward.

gence for the liberty I have taken in thus addressing you.

I remain your obedient humble servant,

P. B. SHELLEY.*

To John Hogg, Esq.,

Norton,

Stockton-on-Tees.

* In the interval between the despatch of letter No. XIII. and letter No. XV. much had happened. Shelley had at length rejoined Hogg at College; and the tendency of the two youthful minds towards audacity of enquiry, so evident in this correspondence, had blossomed out into that portentous tract *The Necessity of Atheism*. This, though issued anonymously, was known to be by Shelley, who indeed distributed copies ostentatiously. Questioned by the Master of University College as to the authorship, he declined to answer. Hogg was questioned in like manner, and in like manner refused information. On the 25th of March, 1811, both youths were summarily expelled, not, ostensibly, for the publication of the tract, but for contumaciously refusing to answer questions. They went together to London and lodged together; but before the next letter was written, not only had Hogg left London, but Shelley had become acquainted with Harriet Westbrook, her sister Eliza, and her father, a retired coffee-house keeper,—Harriet being then sixteen years old, and at the Clapham school where the Misses Shelley were resident.

LETTER XV.

15, POLAND STREET,
LONDON.

April 18th, 1811.

[Thursday.]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Certainly this place is a little solitary ; but, as a person cannot be quite alone when he has even got himself with him, I get on pretty well. I have employed myself in writing poetry ; and, as I go to bed at eight o'clock, time passes quicker than it otherwise might.

Yesterday I had a letter from Whitton* to invite me to his house ; of course, the answer was negative. I

* Whitton was the legal adviser of Mr. Timothy Shelley.

wrote to say that I would resign all claim to the entail, if he * would allow me two hundred pounds a-year, and divide the rest among my sisters. Of course he will not refuse the offer.

You remark that, in Lord Mount Edgecumbe's hermitage, I should have nothing to talk of but myself; nor have I anything here, except I should transcribe the *jeux-d'esprit* of the maid.

Mr. Pilfold has written a very civil letter; my mother intercepted that† sent to my father, and wrote to me to come, enclosing the money. I, of course, returned it.

Miss Westbrook has this moment called on me, with her sister. It certainly was very kind of her.

Adieu. The post goes.

Yours,

P. B. S.

To T. J. Hogg,
Ellesmere.

* The reference here is, of course, to Shelley's father.

† Probably a letter by Shelley repeating his offer *re* £200.

LETTER XVI.

LONDON.

April 24th, 1811.

[Wednesday.]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You have (with wonderful sagacity, no doubt) refuted an argument of mine, the very existence of which I had forgotten. Something singularly conceited, no doubt, by the remarks you make on it. "Fine flowery language," you say. Well, I cannot help it: you see me in my weakest moments. All I can tell you of it is that I certainly was not "laughing," as you conjecture. This circumstance may go *against* me. I do not know that it will, however, as I have by no

means a *precise* idea of what the subject of this composition was.

"The Galilean is not a favourite of mine," a French author writes. (The French write audaciously — rashly.) "So far from owing him any thanks for his favours, I cannot avoid confessing that I owe a secret grudge to his carpentership (*charpenterie*). The reflecting part of the community—that part in whose happiness we philosophers have so strong an interest—certainly do not require his morality, which, where there is no *vice*, fetters *virtue*. Here we all agree. Let this horrid Galilean rule the *Canaille* then! I give them up." And *I* give them up. I will no more mix politics and virtue, they are incompatible.*

* I think this remark must arise out of some considerations set forth in Godwin's *Political Justice*, to the effect that virtue can be promoted by political institution. Shelley, it is evident, had heretofore rallied to that opinion; but he now, after discussion with Hogg, relinquishes it. Who was this "French author"?—Voltaire, or one of that connection?

My little friend Harriet Westbrook is gone to her prison-house.* She is quite well in health; at least so she says, though she looks very much otherwise. I saw her yesterday. I went with her and her sister to Miss H.'s,† and walked about Clapham Common with them for two hours. The youngest is a most amiable girl; the eldest‡ is really conceited, but very condescending. I took the sacrament with her on Sunday. ‡

You say I talk philosophically of her "kindness" in calling on me. She is very charitable and good.§ I shall always think of it with gratitude, because I certainly did not deserve it, and she exposed herself to much possible odium. It is scarcely doing her a kindness—it is perhaps inducing

* Mrs. Fenning's school at Clapham.

† Apparently some friend of the Westbrook's, residing near Harriet's schoolhouse.

‡ *April 21st, 1811.*

§ "She" must, to judge from the general context, mean *Harriet*; though it seems at first sight rather to mean her sister *Eliza*, the *elder* Miss Westbrook.

positive unhappiness—to point out to her a road which leads to perfection, the attainment of which, perhaps, does not repay the difficulties of the progress. What do you think of this? If trains of thought, development of mental energies, influence in any degree a future state; if this is *even* possible—if it stands on *at all* securer ground than mere hypothesis; then is it not a service?—Where am I gotten? Perhaps into another ridiculous argument. I will not proceed; for I shall forget all I have said, and cannot, in justice, animadvert upon any of your critiques.

I called on John Grove* this morning. I met my father in the passage, and politely enquired after his health. He looked as black as a thunder-cloud, and said “Your most humble servant!” I made him a low bow, and, wishing

* A cousin of Shelley's, and brother of Harriet Grove, living in Lincoln's Inn.

him a very good morning, passed on. He is very irate about my proposals.* I cannot resign anything till I am twenty-one. I cannot do anything; therefore I have three more years to consider of the matter you mentioned.

I shall go down to Field Place soon. I wait for Mr. Pilfold's arrival, with whom I shall depart. He is resolved (the old fellow) that I shall not stay at Field Place. If I please—as I shall do for some time—I *will*. This resolution of mine was hinted to him: “Oh, then I shall take his sister away before he comes.” But I shall follow her, as her retirement cannot be a secret. This will probably lead me to wander about for some time. You will hear from me, however, wherever I am.

If all these things are useless, you

* The “proposals” as to money-matters—mentioned in the preceding letter.

will see me at York, or at Ellesmere if you still remain there. "The scenery excites mournful ideas." I am sorry to hear it; I hoped that it would have had a contrary effect. May I indulge the idea that York is as stupid as Oxford? And yet you did not wander *alone* amid the mountains. I think I shall live at the foot of Snowdon. Suppose we both go there directly. Do not be surprised if you see me at Ellesmere. Yes, you would, for it would be a strange thing. I am now nearly recovered.*

Strange that Florian could not see the conclusions from his own reasoning! How can the hope of a higher reward, stimulating the action, make it virtuous, if the essence of virtue is disinterested? as all, who know anything of virtue, must allow, as *he* does allow. How inconsistent is this religion! How

* "Recovered," it would seem, from a college strain. See letter dated *April 29th*, 1811.

apt to pervert the judgment, and finally the heart, of the most amiably-intentioned who confide in it !

I wish I was with you in the mountains ; could not we live there ?

Direct to 15 Poland Street. I write to-morrow to York. :

Your affectionate friend,

P. B. S.

Your B——* is worse than stupid ; he is provoking. Have you really no one to associate with—not even a peasant, a child of nature, a spider ? “ And this from the hermit, the philosopher ! ” Oh, you are right to laugh at me !

I finished the little poem, one stanza of which you said was pretty ; it is, on the whole, a most stupid thing, as you will confess when I some day inflict a

* Apparently the college friend with whom Hogg had left London, and gone to Ellesmere. Was he the *Burdon* mentioned elsewhere in Shelley's correspondence ?

perusal of it on your innocent ears. Yet I have nothing to amuse myself with ; and, if it does not injure others, and you cannot avoid it, I do not see much harm in being mad. You even vindicate it in some almost inspired stanzas, which I found among my transcriptions to-day.

Adieu, I am going to Miss Westbrook's to dinner. Her father is out. I will write to-morrow.*.

*To T. J. Hogg,
Ellesmere.*

* No letter written upon the following day, *April 25th*, 1811, is at present forthcoming. It is evident from the last paragraph of the foregoing that Eliza, aged 30 or so, and Harriet, aged 16, were at least not averse to a little defiance of Mrs. Grundy. Hence, still smarting from the loss of Harriet Grove and breathing out threatenings and slaughter against Intolerance, Shelley gladly seized a chance of obtaining, as he thought, colleagues in his warfare. See especially p. 90.

LETTER XVII.

15, POLAND STREET,
LONDON.

April 26th, 1811.

[*Friday.*]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I indulge despair. *Why* do I so? I will not philosophize. It is perhaps a poor way of administering comfort to myself to say that I *ought* not to be in need of it. I fear the despair which springs from disappointed love is a passion,—a passion, too, which is least of all reducible to reason. But it is a passion, it is independent of volition; it is the necessary effect of a cause, which *must*, I feel, continue to operate. Wherefore, then, do you ask *Why* I

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indulge despair? And what shall I tell you which can make you happier, which can alleviate even solitude and regret? Shall I tell you the truth? Oh you are too well aware of that, or you would not talk of despair! Shall I say that the time may come when happiness shall dawn upon a night of wretchedness? Why should I be a false prophet if I said this? I do not know, except on the general principle that the evils in this world powerfully overbalance its pleasures; how, then, could I be justified in saying this? You will tell me to cease to think, to cease to feel; you will tell me to be anything but what I am; and I feel I must obey the command before I can talk of hope.

I find there can be bigots in philosophy as well as in religion; I, perhaps, may be classed with the former. I *have* read your letter attentively. Yet *all* religionists *do* judge of philosophers in the way which you reprehend. *Faith*

is one of the highest moral virtues,—the foundation, indeed, upon which all others must rest ; and religionists think that he who has neglected to *cultivate* this has not performed *one third* of the moral duties, as Bishop Warburton dogmatically asserts. The religionists, then, by this very *Faith*, without which they could not be religionists, think the most virtuous philosopher must have neglected one third of the moral duties !

If, then, a religionist, the *most* amiable of them, regards the best philosopher as *far* from being virtuous, has not a philosopher reason to suspect the amiability of a system which inculcates so glaringly uncharitable opinions ? Can a being amiable to a high degree—possessed, of course, of judgment, without which amiability would be in a poor way—hold such opinions as these ? Supposing even they were supported by reason, they ought to be suspected as leading to a conclusion

ad absurdum; since, however, they combine irrationality and absurdity with effects on the mind most opposite to retiring amiability, are they not to be *more* than suspected? Take any system of religion, lop off all the disgusting excrescences, or rather adjuncts; retain virtuous precepts; qualify selfish dogmas (I would even allow as much irrationality as amiability could swallow, but uncombined with immorality and self-conceitedness); do all this, and *I* will say, It is a system which *can* do no harm, and, indeed, is highly requisite for the vulgar. But perhaps it is best for the latter that *they* should have it as their fathers gave it them; that the amiable, the enquiring should reject it altogether.

Yet I will allow that it *may* be consistent with amiability, when amiability does not know the deformity of the wretched errors, and that they *really* are as we behold them. I cannot

judge of a system by the flowers which are scattered here and there ; you omit the mention of the *weeds*, which grow so high that few botanists can see the flowers ; and those who *do* gather the latter are frequently, I fear, tainted with the pestilential vapour of the former.

The argument of *supremacy* is really amiable, without that, I should give up the remotest *possibility* of success. Yet that applies but to the existence of a *Creator*, that is inconsequential : the enquirer here, the amiable enquirer, does not pause at the world, lest *she* should be left supreme ; she advances *one* step higher,—not being aware, or not caring to be aware, of the infinity of the staircase which she ascends.* This is *irrational*, but it is not unamiable,—it does not involve the hateful consequences of selfishness, self-con-

* To see exactly what Shelley meant by these somewhat nebulous phrases, we sadly need Hogg's letter.

ceitedness, and the subserviency of faith to the volition of the believer, which are necessary to the existence of "a spurious system of theology."

A *religionist*, I will allow, may be more amiable than a philosopher, although in one instance reason is allowed to sleep, that amiability may watch. Yet, my dear friend, this is not Intolerance; nor can that odious system stand excused on this ground, as its very principle revolts against the dear modesty which suggests a dereliction of reason in the other instance. I again assert—nor perhaps are you prepared to deny, much as your amiable motion might prompt you to wish it—that religion is too often the child of cold prejudice and selfish fear. Love of a Deity, of Allah, Bramah (it is all the same), certainly springs from the latter motive; is this *love*? You know too well it is not. Here I appeal to your own heart, your own feelings. At

that tribunal I feel that I am secure. I once could almost *tolerate* intolerance,—it then merely injured me. Once it merely deprived *me* of all that I cared for, touching myself, on earth; but now it has done more, and I cannot forgive.

Eloisa said; “I have hated myself, that I might love thee, Abelard.” When I hear a religionist prepared to say so, as her sincere sentiments, I then will allow that in a *few* instances the virtue of religion is separable from the vice.

“She is *not* lost for ever”! How I hope that may be true! But I fear *I* can never ascertain, I can never influence an amelioration, as she does not any longer permit a “*philosopher*” to correspond with her. She talks of duty to her *Father*. And this is your amiable religion!

You will excuse my raving, my dear friend: you will not be severe upon my

hatred of a cause which can produce such an effect as this.

You talk of the dead : “ Do we not exist after the tomb ? ”—It is a natural question, my friend, when there is nothing in life : yet it is one on which you have never told me any *solid* grounds for your opinions.

You shall hear from me again soon. I send some verses. I heard from F. yesterday. All that he said was : “ My letters are arrived.—G. S. F.”

My dear friend,

Your affectionate,

P. B. SHELLEY.

LETTER XVIII.

LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS,
LONDON.

April, 28th, 1811.

[Sunday.]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I am now at Grove's. I don't know where I am, where I will be. Future, present, past, is all a mist : it seems as if I had begun existence anew, under auspices so unfavourable. Yet no ! That is stupid.

My poor little friend * has been ill : her sister sent for me the other night. I found her on a couch, pale. Her father is civil to me, very strangely : the sister is too civil by half. She

* Harriet Westbrook.

began talking about *l'Amour*. I philosophized : and the youngest said she had such a headache that she could not bear conversation. Her sister then went away, and I stayed till half-past twelve. Her father had a large party below, he invited me : I refused.

Yes! The fiend, the wretch, shall fall!* Harriet will do for one of the crushers, and the eldest (Emily), † with some taming, will do, too. They are both very clever, and the youngest (my friend) is amiable. Yesterday she was better. To-day her father compelled her to go to Clapham, whither I have conducted her ; and I am now returned.

Why is it that, the moment we two are separated, I can scarcely set bounds to my hatred of intolerance? Is it feeling? is it passion? I would willingly

* "The fiend, the wretch" = Intolerance.

† "Emily" can only have been Eliza. Possibly the elder Miss Westbrook may have borne *both* names, though the latter is the only one that has been recorded.

persuade myself that it is neither ; willingly would I persuade myself that all that is amiable, all that is good, falls by its prevalence, and that *I* ought unceasingly to attempt its destruction. Yet you say that millions of bad are necessary for the existence of a few pre-eminent in excellence. Is not this a despotism of virtue, which is inconsistent with its nature ? Is it not the Asiatic tyrant who renders his territory wretched to fill his seraglio ? the shark who must glut his maw with millions of fish in order that he may exist ? I have often said that I doubted your divinities ; and, if this inference follows the established hypothesis of their existence, I do not merely doubt, but hope that my doubts are founded on truth.

I think, then, that the *term* "superior"* is bad, as it involves this horrible

* Hogg would seem to have been writing of men as "superior" to women.

consequence. Let the word "perfect," then, be offered as a substitute ; to which each who aspires may indulge a hope of arriving ; or rather every one (speaking of *men*) may hope to contribute to woman's arrival, which, in fact, is themselves advancing ; although, like the shadow preceding the figure, or the spiral, it always may advance, and never touch.

My sister does not come to town, nor will she ever, at least I can see no chance of it. I will not deceive myself ; she is lost, lost to everything ; Intolerance has tainted her,—she talks cant and twaddle. I would not venture thus to prophesy without being most perfectly convinced in my own mind of the truth of what I say. It *may* not be irretrievable ; but yes, it is ! A young female who only once, only for a short time, asserted her claim to an unfettered use of reason, bred up with bigots, having before her eyes examples of the

consequences of scepticism,—or even of philosophy, which she must now see to lead directly to the former. A mother who is mild and tolerant, yet narrow-minded. How, I ask, is *she* to be rescued from its influence?

I tell you, my dear friend, openly the feelings of my mind, the state of its convictions on every subject; this, then, is one, and I do not expect that you will say, "It must be so painful to your feelings that I hope you will never again mention it." I do not expect you to say: "I had rather you were under a pleasing error; it is not a friendly act to dissipate the mists which hide a frightful prospect."

On other subjects you have soared above prejudices; you have investigated them, terrible as they may have appeared, and resolved to abide by the result of that investigation. And you *have* abided by it. Why then should there yet remain a subject on which

you profess yourself fearful to enquire? I will not allow you to say "incompetent." Error cannot in any of its shapes be good ; I cannot conceive the possibility.

You talk of the credulity of mankind, its proneness to superstition, that it ever has been a slave to the vilest of errors. Is your inference necessary, or direct, that it ever will continue so? You say that "I have no idea how society could be freed from false notions on almost every subject." No ; nor would the first man in the world, supposing that there ever was one, at the moment of his arriving to his estate, have any conception how a fertile piece of land would look without weeds. He stares at it, and thinks it is least of all fitted for his conveniences ; when a stricter searching into its nature would convince him that it was calculated to contribute to them, with a sufficient proportion of

labour, more than the barer land which
appeared clear.

Dares the lama, most fleet of the sons of the
wind,

The lion to rouse from his skull-covered lair ?
When the tiger approaches, can the fast-fleet-
ing hind

Repose trust in his footsteps of air ?

No. Abandon'd he sinks in a trance of de-
spair :

The monster transfixes his prey :

On the sand flows his life-blood away,
Whilst India's rocks to his death-yells reply,
Protracting the horrible harmony.

Yet the fowl of the desert, when danger en-
croaches,

Dares fearless to perish, defending her brood,
Though the fiercest of cloud-piercing tyrants
approaches,

Thirsting—aye thirsting—for blood,
And demands, like mankind, his brother for
food ;—

Yet more lenient, more gentle, than they,—
For hunger, not glory, the prey
Must perish. Revenge does not howl o'er the
dead,

Nor ambition with fame crown the murderer's
head.

Though weak as the lama that bounds on the
mountains,
And endued not with fast-fleeting footsteps of
air,
Yet, yet will I draw from the purest of
fountains,
Though a fiercer than tiger is there ;
Though, more dreadful than death, it scatters
despair,
Though its shadow eclipses the day,
And the darkness of deepest dismay
Spreads the influence of soul-chilling terror
around,
And lowers on the corpses, that rot on the
ground.

They came to the fountain to draw from its
stream
Waves too pure, too celestial, for mortals to
see ;
They bathed for a while in its silvery beam,
Then perished, and perished like me.
For in vain from the grasp of the Bigot I flee ;
The most tenderly loved of my soul
Are slaves to his hated control.
He pursues me, he blasts me ! 'Tis in vain
that I fly !
What remains but to curse him,—to curse him,
and die ?

There it is—a mad effusion of this morning !

I had resolved not to mortgage,* before you left London ; I told you that I should divide it with my sisters, and leave everything else to fate.

Your affectionate friend,
P. B. S.

* Cf. p. 72.







1897

